DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 230 843 CG 016 710

AUTHOR Bird, Gerald A.
TITLE Families and the Workplace: Role-Management Strategies Used by Husbands and Wives in Two Family Types.
PUB DATE 14 Oct 82
NOTE 13p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the National Council on Family Relations (Washington, DC, October 13-16, 1982).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Administrator Role; Citizen Participation; Cohort Analysis; *Coping; *Dual Career Family; Empathy; *Employed Parents; Higher Education; Parent Role; *Rewards; *Role Conflict; Spouses; *Stress Variables

ABSTRACT

As role sharing becomes increasingly common in families where both husband and wife have careers, role overload becomes a major problem. To identify role management strategies that dual-career and dual-earner families (families in which both husband and wife are employed, the wife in a non-professional occupation) use to increase role reward, self-administered questionnaires were sent to college administrators and their spouses (N=214). Strategies studied included the legitimate excuse (citing a higher claim on one's time), stalling, compartmentalization, empathy, barriers against intrusion, reducing responsibilities, delegation, and organization. Results showed that dual-career husbands used more role management strategies than career-earner husbands or either group of wives. Husbands in dual-career and career-earner families tended not to use the legitimate excuse and placed high value on family roles. Employed wives in career-earner families used empathy to increase reward in family roles. The results also showed that husbands did empathize with their wives and did offer support. Delegation of duties and postponing responsibilities were strategies used by wives in dual-career families. There were indications that most role management strategies did increase role reward. Only compartmentalization and barriers against intrusion did not. (JAC)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED230843

FAMILIES AND THE WORKPLACE: ROLE-MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES USED BY HUSBANDS AND WIVES IN TWO FAMILY TYPES *

Author: Dr. Gerald A. Bird
Assistant Professor
College of Human Resources
205 Human Resources Annex Building
Virginia Tech
Blacksburg, VA 24061

* A paper presented at the Annual Conference of the National Council on Family Relations, Washington, D.C., October 14, 1982.

CG 016710

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Gerald A. Bird

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

FAMILIES AND THE WORKPLACE: ROLE MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES USED BY HUSBANDS AND WIVES IN TWO FAMILY TYPES

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to identify the role-management strategies used by husbands and wives in dual-earner families to alleviate role overload and increase reward in family, employment, and community roles. The sample consisted of college and university administrators and their husbands and wives from NASULGC institutions. Regression analysis indicated which role-management strategies increased role reward.

Strategies significantly related to role reward were as follows: for husbands in career-earner families, the Legitimate Excuse in family roles; for husbands in dual-career families, the Legitimate Excuse, Empathy, Reducing Responsibilities and Organization in family roles and the Legitimate Excuse and Organization in Employment roles; for wives in career-earner families, Empathy in family roles and Organization in community roles; and for wives in dual-career families, Stalling Until Pressures Subside and Delegation in family roles.

FAMILIES AND THE WORKPLACE: ROLE-MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES USED BY HUSBANDS AND WIVES IN TWO FAMILY TYPES

During the 1960s and 1970s, the labor force participation rate for married women increased rapidly, so that by 1980, 50.2 percent of married women were gainfully employed outside the home (Johnson, 1980; U. S. Department of Labor, 1980). This dramatic change in employment patterns of married women contributed to changes in the role expectations and role performance of husbands and wives (Moore and Sawhill, 1976; Rallings and Nye, 1979).

As wives increasingly share the employment role, there is also the expectation that husbands will more fully participate in parenting and household management. As role sharing increases for both husband and wife, they describe their lives as growing more hectic and time constrained. Role overload is cited as a major concern of dual-earner families (Holmstrom, 1973; Rapoport and Rapoport, 1969).

While there are complaints of role overload, husbands and wives also indicate there are rewards associated with the life style. These rewards include a more satisfying marital relationship and gratification with the development of their children into more independent and resourceful individuals. Husbands indicate they enjoy the extra contact with their children and express pride in their wives' career accomp-

lishments (Booth, 1977; Rapoport and Rapoport, 1976, St. John-Parsons, 1978).

Role demand and role reward appear to be highly related. Fulfilling the demands of one set of role obligations makes fulfilling other roles more challenging (Goode, 1960), making success and commitment to other roles difficult (Edgell, 1970; Linder, 1970). A number of scholars have theorized that the use of certain role-management strategies would reduce the effects of role overload and increase role reward (Goode, 1960; Marks, 1977; Merton, 1957; Sieber, 1974; Toby, 1952).

The primary objective of this study was to assess the impact of role-management strategies on the relationship between role demand and role reward. Role demand is the perceived extent of how demanding one's activities and responsibilities are of time. Role reward is the perceived extent of how satisfying and rewarding responsibilities and activities are in daily life.

Data were obtained from self-administered questionnaires sent to a national sample of college and university administrators and their husbands or wives. Administrators chosen for the study were deans and directors of academic or research units and persons in central administration identified as chief administrative officers. The sample consisted of 214 subjects, 107 married couples.

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS:

HUSBANDS:

For husbands in career-earner families, one strategy made a significant contribution to explained variation in family roles (Table 1). A negative Beta indicated an inverse relationship existed between The Legitimate Excuse strategy and role reward. The Excuse had a low mean score, therefore, as use of The Excuse declined, role reward tended to increase (the inverse relationship could also occur). Husbands in career positions whose wives were employed in a non-professional capacity tended NOT to make excuses to delay performing family tasks and responsibilities they may have disliked doing. The husbands in career-earner families in the present study scored family roles both the most demanding and most rewarding, an indication of the importance they placed on family roles (parenting and being a husband).

Husbands in dual-career families used more role-management strategies than the career-earner husbands or either group of wives in this study. This unique situation for husbands in dual-career families would seem to be related to the inherent set of time constraints that accompany the dual-career life style or family type. Previous studies indicated that marriage to career-employed wives seemed to put more pressure on the husbands to participate in or at least share in the decision-making process about how household tasks would be accomplished. Other analysis indicated that these husbands, on the average,

shared family tasks to a greater degree than did husbands in career-earner families. Increased sharing of household tasks in family roles in addition to their career employment responsibilities may have led to use of four strategies to increase significantly the role reward attached to being a spouse and a parent.

Husbands in dual-career families tended NOT to use the role-management strategies of Reducing Responsibilities and The Legitimate Excuse (indicated by low mean scores). Negative Betas for those strategies and a high mean score on role reward indicated that avoiding the use of those strategies increased role reward in family roles. Husbands in dual-career families were inclined to perform disliked tasks or responsibilities at home and on the job without making excuses or using home responsibilities as a means of reducing their workload according to responses on use of the Legitimate Excuse.

Significant increases in explained variation for the Organization and Empathy strategies indicated that husbands in dual-career families were organized at home and on the job and the empathy or social support of wives made parenting and job responsibilities more rewarding.

With the extra responsibilities that accompany the dual-career family life style, the strategy of Organization may have been the pragmatic means of coping with it all. There appeared to be consistency in strategy useage by husbands in dual-career

families, characterized by an intertwining of strategies at work and at home.

WIVES:

Employed wives in career-earner families reported utilizing the strategy of Empathy to significantly increase reward in family roles (Table 1). Empathy is the social support received from husbands in parenting and employment roles. A recent study by Lein (1979) showed that husbands did not always willingly increase their sharing of household tasks when wives were employed. The present study indicates that husbands do empathize with the multiple role responsibilities of their wives and offer some degree of empathy or social support.

Two strategies, Delegation and Stalling, appeared to work together to relieve the possible overload and time constraints in family roles for wives in dual-career families. Household tasks seem to be delegated to the husband, children, or others outside the home, whenever possible. Tasks and responsibilities that cannot be delegated appear to be postponed, that is,wives use the Stalling strategy, (until pressures subside).

In conclusion, there are indications that the majority of role-management strategies operate as theorized. Only two strategies, Compartmentalization and Barriers Against Intrusion, did not significantly increase role reward in any regressions.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Family Types

Career-Earner Family: The husband was employed in a career as an university administrator and the wife was employed either full- or part-time in a non-professional occupation (Scanzoni, 1972, 1980).

Dual-Career Family: Both husband and wife were employed in career positions, either husband or wife was an university administrator (Scanzoni, 1972, 1980).

Role-Management Strategies

The Legitimate Excuse: An approved technique for avoiding sanctions by asserting that an equally high or higher claim prevented the individual from fulfilling their obligations (Marks, 1977; Toby, 1952).

Stalling Until Pressures Subside: Recognized as being successful when the individual is under temporary pressure from two or more groups or to perform in two or more conflicting roles (Toby, 1952).

Ccompartmentalization: The separation of family life from work roles. It is the definition of roles so that appropriate role behavior depends upon location and circumstances Goode, 1960; Rapoport and Rapoport, 1976; Toby, 1952).

Empathy: The mutual support exchanged by spouses sharing the same roles or circumstances (Marks, 1977; Merton, 1957).

Barriers Against Intrusion: Techniques for preventing others from initiating or even continuing role relationships (Goode, 1960).

Reducing Responsibilities (On The Job): This strategy has two facets. One is changing the standards of performance so that either more time is available for responsibilities in that role or to gain time to perform tasks in other roles. The second facet is not accepting additional responsibilities in a role, pleading an overload of responsibilities already (Goode, 1960; Hall, 1972; Marks, 1977; Toby, 1952).

Delegation: The assignment of various role activities to another person or group. These activities commonly include the housekeeper and child care functions delegated to other family members or to hired help. Activities at work may be delegated to another employee (Goode, 1960; Hall, 1972; Rapoport and Rapoport, 1969.

Organization: The process by which the individual rank orders the importance of various activities and performs the most important ones first (Hall, 1972; Holmstrom, 1973).

Table 1

SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANT REGRESSIONS OF ROLE-MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ROLE DEMAND AND ROLE ROLE REWARD

Strategies	Career-Earner Families N=38		Dual-Career Families N=69	
	Husbands	Wives	Husbands	Wives
The Excuse	*		*	
Stalling				*
Compartment-alization				
Empathy		*	*	
Barriers				
Reducing Re-sponsibilities			*	
Delegation				**
Organization			**	

** p <.01
* p <.05

References

Booth, Alan

1977 "Wife's employment and husband's stress: A replication and refutation." Journal of Marriage and the Family 139:645-650.

Edgell, Stephen

1970 "The spiralists: Their careers and family lives." British Journal of Sociology 21:314-323.

Goode, William J.

1960 "A theory of role strain." American Sociological Review 25:483-496.

Hall, Douglas T.

1972 "A model of coping with role conflict: The role behavior of college educated women." Administrative Science Quarterly 17:471-486.

Holmstrom, Lynda Lytle

1973 The Two-Career Family. Cambridge, Mass.: Schenkman.

Johnson, Beverly L.

1980 "Marital and family characteristics of the labor force." Monthly Labor Review 103(4):49-52.

Lein, Laura

1979 "Male participation in home life: Impact of social supports and breadwinner responsibility on the allocation of tasks." The Family Coordinator 28:489-495.

Linder, Staffan B.

1970 The Harried Leisure Class. New York: Columbia University Press.

Marks, Stephen R.

1977 "Multiple roles and role strain: Some notes on human energy, time and commitment." American Sociological Review 42:921-936.

Merton, Robert K.

1957 "The role-set: Problems in sociological theory." British Journal of Sociology 8:106-120.

Moore, Kristin A. and Isabel V. Sawhill

1976 Women in the American Economy. New York: Columbia University.

Rallings, F. M. and F. Ivan Nye

1979 "Wife-mother employment, family and society." In W. Burr, R. Hill, F. I. Nye, and I. Reiss (Eds.), Contemporary Theories About the Family, Vol. 1. New York: Free Press.

Rapoport, Rhona and Robert N. Rapoport

1969 "The dual-career family: A variant pattern and social change." Human Relations 22:3-30.

Rapoport, Rhona and Robert N. Rapoport

1976 Dual-Career Families Re-examined. New York: Harper Colophon.

Scanzoni, John

1972 Sexual Bargaining: Power Politics in the American Marriage. Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice Hall.

Scanzoni, John

1980 "Contemporary marriage types." Journal of Family Issues 1:125-140.

Sieber, Sam D.

1974 "Toward a theory of role accumulation." American Sociological Review 39:567-578.

St. John-Parsons, Donald

1978 "Continuous dual-career families: A case study." In J. B. Bryson and R. Bryson (Eds.), Dual-Career Couples. New York: Human Sciences.

Toby, Jackson

1952 "Some variables in role conflict analysis." Social Forces 30:323-327.

U. S. Department of Labor

1980 Marital and Family Characteristics of Workers, March 1980. Washington, D. C.: U. S. Government Printing Office.